



## **It started with a whisper** by percyandnico

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**Summary:** El's first summer - love, jealousy, fun, friends... the discovering of the outside world meant so many things for her. And Mike was sure as hell going to make it the best summer of her life. T for swearing, hints of sexual attraction between adults and even teenagers very, very later on in the story.

## 1. Summer

Eleven opened her eyes as the faint lights of sunrise entered her room.

As soon as she did, she shot out of bed and ran into the living room, checking the calendar: with a red marker, she had drawn a tiny sketch version of herself and her friends holding hands.

"Goodmorning, kiddo" Hopper was already dressed up for work, his hair still disheveled as he started to busy himself in the kitchen.

"Goodmorning!" Eleven almost yelled, excited.

Hopper could feel her staring into his skin, almost as if she was burning him with her eyes with that insistence "What is it?"

"It's summer" she said matter-of-factly, sitting at the table and waiting expectantly for him to turn around.

She had waited the exact amount of time that man had told Hopper: after the Snow Ball, she hadn't set not even her nose outside that house, waiting eagerly for summer to come around.

The Chief groaned mentally and for a split second he thought about ignoring what the kid had just said. But then he just sighed and grabbed the plates, setting them on the table "I guess we'll have to talk about curfew and everything then".

"Cur...few?" El repeated.

"Be it your word of the day" Hopper grumbled, biting down on his toast "Curfew. That would be the hour you have to get back home".

"Oh" she frowned for a second, but then she slowly nodded: that made sense.

"Go get ready after you finish eating" he said, smiling down at her "I'll drop you off at Karen's on my way to work, we'll talk while we're riding".

Eleven scarfed down the rest of her breakfast and dashed to her room, opening her closet: she quickly took out a pair of jeans and a big red t-shirt. In a matter of minutes, she was already at the front door, excited for her very first day of freedom.

Hopper shook his head lightly, chuckling; although he was worried sick about the kid, it was obviously a pleasure to see her so happy and to be honest she deserved it all.

"So" Hopper said, stopping the car in front of Will's house "what did we say?"

"Home at ten, then if I behave you'll consider letting me stay out

later" she said, repeating his exact same words; at some point she mimicked his stern expression "No funny business, make sure to tell the Wheeler boy".

Hopper rolled his eyes and stroked her short hair, "Good kid. You can go now, and behave".

Eleven hopped off the car and waved at him before running to the front door, knocking on it. Joyce opened immediately, already knowing she'd be coming by "Good morning Eleven! I guess you're not gonna waste not even a day of summer then?"

The girl smiled and shook her head, her eyes lighting up as Will was finishing drinking his juice.

"Hi, El" he said smiling softly at her while she waved at him.

She really wanted to get to know Will better, her seemed the most sensitive and sweet of the whole group. He was always so quiet, and when he spoke he usually said smart or sweet things.

"Come on" he said, slipping his shoes on "we better hurry if you want to beat Max to Mike's house".

Eleven's eyes darkened: she had almost forgotten about Max, the redhead that was in her opinion interested in her Mike.

She shook her head: but was Mike really hers?

Will just chuckled "I think you worry too much, El".

They got on the bike, El behind Will, and they met Dustin along the way "Race you two suckers to Mike's".

They won, in the end, because Dustin had gotten distracted by Lucas adding to their pack when they were almost there.

"I swear, Lucas, I was about to win!" he exclaimed.

"You just wanna blame me for losing" the other one retorted.

El just smiled to herself, amused, 'til she tuned them out when they entered Mike's house.

"Goodmorning Mrs. Wheelers" they all said together, earning a smile from the woman.

"Mike is still sleeping" she informed them, sipping at a cup of coffee.

Eleven was the first one to move: she dashed to his room quickly followed by the others. She timidly sat on the edge of the bed, looking at Mike's sleeping face.

"Just get this over with and wake up that fucker – ouch!" Dustin's complaint was cut off by Will, who just elbowed him the ribs

.Eleven inched closer to Mike and gently shook his shoulder. The boy slowly opened his eyes, yawning, and at seeing Eleven's brown eyes in front of him he just stood there mouth agape, his eyes briefly looking at her teeth grazing her lower lip. "Goodmorning" she said smiling the biggest smile. "Am I in heaven?" he mumbled. He then realized he had said it aloud when laughter filled the room. He turned a good shade of red before returning his gaze to the girl that looked expectantly at him "Goodmorning, El". And that was their reunion, simple as that. From that moment on, both of them were sure they weren't going to be separated ever again.

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"You know, it isn't hard" Mike said, noticing how El just sat on the sidewalk looking at Dustin and Lucas competing against each other in a race.

"Mh?" she said, apparently snapping out of thought.

"Riding a bike" he explained "it isn't hard. If you want, I can teach you".

"Really?" she asked with those big eyes of hers, as if he had just given her the moon as a gift.

"Really" he smiled, taking her hand spontaneously, leading her to his bike.

"Okay" he started instructing "just put a leg on that side" he let go of her hand as she positioned herself.

"Don't let go" she narrowed her eyes, afraid she'd fall.

"I won't" he promised.

He panicked for a moment: how was he supposed to hold her still? Eleven just took his hands and placed them on her hips, unaware of his cheeks flushing red and Will's snickering.

"O-okay" he stuttered, earning a confused stare from the girl "keep your focus and try to keep your balance; feet on the pedals; hands on the brakes – El, don't use your powers, that's just cheating".

He laughed as she blushed "Sorry, I'm just afraid I'll fall".

"You won't. Besides, I'll be right at your side the entire time".

Lucas had made a gagging sound at some point, his and Dustin's laughter echoing in the sunny, clear sky of the early summer.

Eleven tentatively pressed on a pedal, shrieking when the bike went forward; Mike snickered and followed her close by, keeping his hands

on her waist.

And by the way, he was beginning to feel slightly nervous as he felt her hips move under his touch.

He had never been this close to a girl, plus he was madly in love with El, so the situation caught him off guard: he would've prepared mentally if he knew.

"You're doing good!" he incited her as she started going forward. He slowly let go of her hips, still following closely just in case she needed him.

She turned right and started going faster, laughing a little as the others clapped and smiled fondly at her.

"Mike" she called for him, "how do I stop this thing?"

And then it hit him: he hadn't told her how to stop!

His eyes widened as he sprinted towards the bike, Eleven looked back at him and didn't notice the wall in front of her. Just when the bike made contact with the wall, Mike grabbed her by the wrist and pulled her towards him, both falling to the ground with a loud thud. Everybody rushed over to them, while Eleven slowly cracked an eye open only to find her face inches from Mike's.

"Thanks" she whispered, her cheeks slightly pink.

"Don't mention it" he gave her a lopsided smile of his, tempted by her full, round lips.

"Mike bro, seriously?!" Dustin broke the magic of the moment, pulling Eleven up to her feet "You didn't tell her about the brakes?"

"I'm sorry!" he said, "It just slipped my mind".

"Typical of boys" a new voice found its way into the discussion "so stupid".

Max made her way to them on her skateboard, red hair flying in the hair and everything. She stopped by Mike and offered her hand to get up, while Eleven glared daggers at her.

Will just rolled his eyes and elbowed her lightly, mouthing 'control yourself'.

He was right: if she failed to keep her promise of not showing her powers in public places, Hopper would've never let her go outside again.

Once Mike noticed Eleven's pout he frowned and got closer, whispering "You mad at me?"

Her pout just increased as she shook her head and walked towards her previous spot on the sidewalk.

"What did I do?" the boy turned to Will, who seemed to be the best of them at knowing girls.

Max looked at Eleven funny: she had looked forward to meeting the girl for a long time, but she didn't seem very happy to meet her.

"Trouble in paradise" Lucas sang in a high pitched tone, earning a glare from practically everyone.

"You really are blind" Will sighed, shaking his head as he made his way towards Eleven.

"Hey, uhm..." Mike finally approached Eleven after the tenth death stare he received from Will, even though he still didn't really know what had happened "wanna go for another ride? You can sit behind me and we can ride to my house. It's lunchtime so we have to go back anyways".

Eleven looked at him from under her eyelashes, exchanging a brief look with Will before cracking a soft smile – the one she reserved for Mike only – and she hopped on the bike.

At some point during the ride she held herself close to him, latching her arms around his waist; Mike shuddered feeling her breath and her laugh on his neck in a pleasant way that made his skin tingle.

"Hold on tight!" he screamed before taking a downhill, the bike speeding up; Dustin, Will, Lucas and Max were behind them, going slower to give the two space.

"They've been apart for too long" Will told them, almost in a motherly tone "you should give them some alone time sometimes; they've suffered a lot, sharing a bond this strong and being torn apart is hard".

For a second everyone looked at him blinking, then they exchanged looks and nodded. Mike had always been a good friend to each of them even though he was suffering for El's disappearing (except for his rough start with Max), so they wanted him to be happy.

When they stopped in front of Mike's house, Eleven was panting "Wow".

"We can ride some more if you want, this afternoon" Mike said, smiling at her "maybe we can talk to Hopper to get you a bike of your own".

"I just...I think I just want to ride with you for now" she said, blushing a little; she felt uneasy saying certain things to the boy, but it was also amusing seeing his flustered expression every time.

"If you want" she added, eyes widening: she didn't want to bother him, either. She just wanted to spend time with him and the others. Mike smiled, still red "Y-yeah, no problem, El".

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"So, what do you guys want to do?" Dustin was standing in the middle of the room while everyone else was just relaxing with their stomach full: Mike and Eleven were sitting closely in the fort; Lucas, Max and Will were just sprawled on the couch.

"Really, Dustin?" Lucas groaned, burying his face in a pillow "just relax for a while".

"But it's the first day of summer!" he exclaimed, almost as if Lucas had offended him personally "we must do something!".

"Maybe we can watch a film?" Max suggested, trying to keep the two from breaking into one of their fights.

Mike turned to Eleven "What do you want to do?"

"I like outside" she whispered.

The boy nodded: she had been confined to the lab and then Hopper's house for so long, it was obvious she wanted to spend time outside. He just winked at her and mouthed 'trust me'.

"Yeah, a movie sounds fun" he said, while El frowned a little bit but decided to go along with his plan.

They all sat together on the floor, the couch being occupied by Dustin who lay on it.

Mike sat between Max and Eleven, and she ended up enjoying the film they had chosen – The Hobbit –, but mostly of all she enjoyed Mike's attention: he had explained everything she didn't know whispering in her ear, he had held her hand most of the time and he even played with her hair at some point. She leaned on his shoulder as the film came to an end, closing her eyes.

"Don't you fall asleep in the end, El" he said, smiling "it's the best part".

"It feels good" she yawned, motioning at his hands in her hair "don't stop".

Mike turned red: apparently, he hadn't noticed when he had started doing that, but he smiled at her anyways.

He had the urge to kiss her, he felt it tug at his stomach, but he wanted to be sure that that was what she wanted, and even so, he wanted to make things right.

As the film ended, Mike let his hand fall from Eleven's head and she



whined a little, opening her eyes and watching him in a pleading way "Just five more minutes?"

Lucas and Max were talking and Dustin was playing with some videogame, while Will had a book in his hands.

Mike just looked at those eyes once again: how could he say no?

He put his arm around her shoulders again, playing with the wild curls and rubbing her head. He had never found himself in a situation like that before: he was only thirteen and she was the first girl he truly liked, so it was all odd and new.

"You know, I feel like it's the first day of summer and I'm already spoiling you" he whispered, his eyes watching her reaction.

She smiled a little and her cheeks tinged pink, "Is it bad? Spo...spoil?"

Mike shrugged "It means I do everything you like, everything you ask"

"I don't think it's bad" she said, looking up at him with a glint in her eyes; she was going to be the death of him.

The boy raised both of his eyebrows, rubbing a spot behind her ear. She closed her eyes and hummed lightly.

Lucas' voice made Mike jump a little "Shouldn't you two get a room or something?"

"Shut up" he said, his ears red.

"Just saying" he sing-sang again, smirking.

"You're the one talking" Mike arched a brow, nodding at his arms around Max.

Lucas shut up and rolled his eyes, then Mike stood up receiving a look from Eleven.

"Okay guys" he clapped both of his hands "I think it's all for today".

Will and Dustin exchanged looks: since when their days ended at 5 pm?

Then Mike looked at them as if to say: don't make me ask you this, just go through with it? And everybody understood: El.

"What are we planning on doing tomorrow?" Dustin said stretching.

"Maybe we can talk later on our walkie talkies?" suggested Mike, urging them to the door.

"El doesn't have one!" retorted Max, frowning.

"We'll stop by the Chief's office and see what we can do" the boy quickly dismissed the matter, accompanying his friends to the door "see you tomorrow!"

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"Thanks" El said suddenly while they were walking towards the police station.

"For what?"

"For spending time alone" she said, shrugging "it's nice".

Mike smiled at her, happy to hear that. He was going to make that the best summer of her life, he was determined; he just had to figure out a way to make some alone time for him and Eleven, especially if he wanted to make a couple out of them.

When they entered the office, everyone was surprised to see the El there, but they let her in immediately.

"Hi Hop" she said, plopping down on a chair.

"Hello Chief" Mike nodded.

"What are you two doing here? Why alone?" he asked, brow furrowing.

Mike panicked, but Eleven handled it "The went home, so we came here because I need a walkie talkie. Can I have one? And Mike can stop by and get me with his bike in the morning; I don't want one right now, I'll just stick with his".

Hopper groaned "Well, wait. Yes, you can get a walkie talkie, I'll give you the money to buy one. Second, who said anything about the Wheeler boy picking you up? Why can't I just drop you off?"

"Because" she said matter-of-factly "you wake up early for work and they usually go out by nine thirty or ten".

"Okay" the man sighed, running his hands across his face and then pointing a finger to Mike "you and I will need to talk, but not right now".

He searched in his drawer for his wallet and gave Eleven some money, smiling at her and ruffling her hair "Go and have fun".

"Do you spoil me?" she asked out of blue, and Mike widened his eyes. The Chief just stared at her "What?"

"Just wanted to know if I used the word right. You spoil me, right?"

"Well..." the man hesitated, then just shrugged "sometimes, yes".

Before she could add anything on the matter, Mike stood up and clapped his hands "Shall we go find you the coolest walkie of all time?"

Eleven nodded enthusiastically and bid Hopper goodbye with a kiss on the cheek.

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An hour later, both Eleven and Mike were leaning against his bike outside an ice cream shop. Eleven had chosen three flavors, because she didn't know which ones she liked, and she had already eaten half of her treat: sure vanilla and cookie dough were her favorite ones, given how fast she had finished them.

Mike smiled fondly at her when she couldn't see him, and offered some of his ice cream "Try this", he said handing her his cone with mint and lemon.

El licked the part with the mint, licking then her lips as they tilted up and she took another taste "I like the green one".

Mike was mesmerized by her lips.

She then proceeded to the lemon side and she made a disgusted face, "Ew! It is...uhm..."

"Bitter" Mike finished the sentence for her "it's a little stingy and gives you a bad feeling at the back of your throat, right?"

She nodded, stealing another bit of mint before giving him his cone back.

"But I like the green one" she added again, thoughtful "we have to come back and get more next time!"

"Of course" he agreed.

He wanted to give her the world, and he sure as hell was going to; a demogorgon and the Mind Flayer hadn't been able to pull them apart. He would get her all the ice cream in the world if necessary.

She smiled at him and blushed when she noticed him staring, tucking a curl behind her ear.

He could get used to that, yeah.

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**So. This is my first fic on here and well...well. As you can see, I'm a crazy Mileven shipper and I've found some pretty good stories on here and wanted to give my contribution to everyone that felt the same way I do about them.**

**The fic will be about El's first summer and her discovery of the outside world. Lots of Mileven you guys, you were warned.**

## 2. Other half

*"You put the boom boom into my heart, you set my soul sky-high when your lovin starts"* Dustin was singing and swirling El around, making her laugh.

They were getting her started on music, since she hadn't ever heard anything except old music that Hopper hardly listened to.

Max rolled her eyes at Dustin's movements, while the others all snickered at the boy and Eleven's embarrassment: she had never listened to music nor danced before, so she was hesitant in all her moves.

As the song ended, the girl tried to escape from Dustin's enthusiasm, but not even Mike looked like he was going to stop his friend; she was pulled right back to the center of the room as another song started.

*"Her name was Lola, she was a showgirl"* the boy danced around her, clapping his hands at the rhythm of the music. At some point, El just shrugged thinking what the hell, why not, so she grabbed Dustin's hands; plus, she already knew the song.

*"She would merengue and do the cha-cha and while she tried to be a star Tony always tended bar across the crowded floor, they worked from eight til four"* everyone stopped laughing as they heard El's surprisingly harmonic singing voice but she was too caught up dancing and singing to notice people staring.

Dustin looked startled for a moment, too, before guiding her movements to dance and she swayed her hips at the rhythm of the music, laughing between the singing.

When the song ended, everyone was mouth agape "What?"

El's cheeks tinged pink: had she done something weird?

"You have such nice voice" Max smiled at her, and El gave her an uncertain smile in return: Will had assured her that the redhead and Lucas were going to go serious about their relationship and that she shouldn't worry about Mike, so she was trying to befriend her too.

It was just different than with the boys, to who she had connected instantly in a time in which she was desperate for safety.

As another song rolled around, Max joined El in her singing; she was starting to learn some songs due to the radio always being on in her car rides.

*"I know something about love"* Max started singing, smiling to her

friend as they danced around in Mike's room *"you gotta want it bad, if that guy's got into your blood, reach out and get him"*.

The boys just watched the two move together and laugh uncontrollably as they jumped on the couch; Max got down and continued the lyrics *"I know something about love you've gotta show him and make him see the moon up above, go out and get him!"*

She winked at El and she blushed; it was true that she didn't get most of what the songs said, but Nancy had explained the meaning of this particular song when she had heard her hum it.

The boys seemed to understand Max's intentions as they started clapping and singing, shoving Mike forward "If you want him to be, always by your side, if you want him to, only think of you tell him that you're never gonna leave him!"

At that point, both El and Mike were blushing hard, but the girl kept dancing through it all, caught up in the song.

She inched closer to Mike, smiling at him and mouthing 'dance!'

His eyes widened as she took his hands and started swirling them around, and eventually accepted the fact that if El ever said 'jump off of the very tall building' he'd do it.

As the song finished, everyone collapsed onto the bed, breathing heavily and still chuckling.

El was the first to catch her breath and she started peeking around Mike's things; it was just a habit she had taken in the past week, and it didn't bother the boy, so she always fidgeted with the action figures scattered around the room.

"What's this?" she asked, lifting his guitar's case with her mind.

Typical of Eleven: she could get pretty lazy sometimes and she'd randomly lift things up. Max was still startled whenever she did this, but it didn't bother the other girl: she knew it wasn't a 'look at that weirdo' kinda look.

"Uhm..." Mike seemed hesitant.

"Man" Dustin beat him to it "didn't you tell her? He plays the guitar!"

"Guitar?" she was still new to many things.

"An instrument" Mike quickly explained "with which you make music".

El's eyes lit up as Lucas added "He can sing pretty well, too".

"Please don't ask" Mike whispered, looking at her with pleading eyes, but she didn't listen anyways.

"Please play something?"

When Mike groaned and shook his head she knelt in front of him

showing off her best puppy eyes – she had been using that a lot with Hopper – "Please play for me?"

The boy was refusing to look at her, instead he was looking up the ceiling. When she whined a little and tugged at his shirt, Mike huffed a little trying not to smile "Okay, but later, when we're alone".

El held up her fist in victory, quickly pecking him on the cheek in a new, spontaneous gesture; she had never done that before and it startled her too, as she stood for a few seconds still, her head tilted to the side.

Mike blushed and couldn't suppress his smile anymore.

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At some point the boys had started playing video games sitting on the floor, while Eleven and Max were sitting on the bed behind them, watching from time to time but mostly talking between themselves.

"So you and Lucas...?" Eleven trailed out with a whisper, smiling.

"Ugh" Max rolled her eyes, smiling "he's impossible sometimes, but yes, we're together now. Like, together together".

Eleven smiled softly at her nodding "I think you're cute together, and he doesn't fight much with Dustin when you're around".

"Well thank you, I'll take that as a compliment" they both laughed loudly, earning some pointed stares from the guys – 'what are they talking about?' 'I don't know were you listening?' – but they didn't care.

It was nice, having a girl friend.

"Have you got any plans for this Saturday?" Max blurted out after a few seconds of thinking.

"Uhm...no, I mean I just go out with you guys" the other one shrugged, tilting her head to the side.

"What do you say you crash at my house?"

"Crash?"

"A sleepover!"

"Shhhh!" Mike exclaimed "We're playing".

Max rolled her eyes, but Eleven smiled wickedly at her and mouthed 'watch'.

She tangled her hands into Mike's soft locks, tilting his head upwards to meet her eyes "Don't shush us, Mike".

The boy's cheeks lit up as he gulped, and Max noticed how his eyes shifted every once in a while to the girl's lips.

"I-I..."

Eleven stuck her bottom lip out, frowning and repeating the word – it was one of the first she had learned and she loved the sound of it – "do you want me to shush you?"

She had meant nothing by it, Mike knew it, but his eyes widened at the thought of her lips crashing on his to shush him.

Eleven laughed at his expression and pressed her forehead against his for a second before pulling away "I'm joking".

The boy let out a breath as she let go of her grip on him, aware of her hands still tangled in his hair; she loved it, it was soft and smelled nice.

She slowly leaned on him, her chin in his hair as she curled her fingers in his black locks, tracing invisible patterns.

She wasn't comfortable with touch – she hugged the others occasionally, but that was it –, yet she was so touchy with him, he felt special.

"Eggos!" Karen called from upstairs, and Eleven was up before everyone could even register what had happened. She opened the door with a flick of her hand and disappeared down the stairs.

"You still haven't told me what's a sleepover" Eleven had her mouth full of Eggos, but she didn't care; she was feeling so food-happy in that moment.

"Uhm" Max wiped at her mouth before answering "it's when you sleep at someone else's house".

"But why? I have a house".

"Because" the redhead gave her a wicked grin "it's fun! We can talk about stuff without the boys hearing, we can do girl things..."

"Why, do you know what girl things even are?" Lucas laughed and she rolled her eyes.

"Don't mind him" she said, "can you like make him fall on his ass or something? Pull the chair from under him, you choose".

Eleven laughed and shook her head, moving her wrist in a very subtle and quick movement and a waffle flew right into Lucas' face. Everyone joined her in her laughter, while Lucas muttered something about being too nice to her now.

"So? Do you wanna come?" Max asked, turning her attention to the girl.

El nodded smiling "I'll have to ask Hop, though".

"Let me know what he says when you get home!" Max said, clapping her hands together "so we're gonna write down a list of what you

need!"

'I'll help you' Mike mouthed, catching her panicked stare. She blushed and nodded slightly, giving him her half smile.

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As usual, Mike and Eleven were left alone after a while.

"So you're gonna go to Max's house on Saturday?" he asked, plopping down onto the bed.

El nodded, sitting near him and smiling down at him "I think so, but I'll have to see what Hopper says".

"No El for me on Saturday?" he asked, frowning playfully at her.

"Stop!" she said blushing and giggling "I'll go to her house, after staying with you".

Mike smiled and stuck his tongue out "I already knew that, I was just teasing you".

"Teasing?"

"Messing around, joking" he explained, propping himself up on an elbow "what do you want to do today? We still have a lot of spare time".

"Play for me?" she reminded him, extending her hand and bringing the guitar case next to him with her mind, making it fall on the bed.

"I thought you had forgot" he sighed, shaking his head "but okay".

Eleven watched him carefully as he adjusted the chords and cleared his voice, then he started playing for her and it was as if she had been hypnotized for the whole duration of the song: his voice was so clear and pacifying she found it almost impossible to tear her gaze away from him.

As the song ended, Mike looked up at her and she smiled one of her Mike-smiles, as Dustin called them, her eyes big; the boy could never get used to that look she only gave him, as if he was her one true hero.

"You are so good at this!" she practically yelled, bouncing up and down on the bed "another one? Pleeese?"

"You really don't have to beg everytime" Mike chuckled, thinking for a few seconds and then starting another song. This time, Eleven crawled closer to him, and he gulped aware of her stare on him.

She observed the way he scrunched up his lips when he was concentrating on playing, the way he softly whispered some of the words, the way his hands moved without hesitation on the chords – it gave her a strange feeling, watching Mike. She felt as though



something tugged at her heart, sending a funny feeling to her stomach.

After another song, Mike laughed and closed the guitar in the case "Okay, promise I'll play for you another time if you let me free now". Eleven tilted her head to the side, watching him as he put the guitar back to its place. She then plopped down on her stomach on the bed, rolling around "What do we do now?"

Mike had the urge to just kiss her right then and there, but as usual something held him back. It was El's first kiss – well, if he wasn't counting the one they had shared almost two years ago... – and he wanted it to be special, like she was.

Eleven stood up while she thought about what she wanted to do, slipping her hands in her pockets. Mike watched her like she put some sort of spell on him; her onesie made her look so adorable.

"I wanna go for a ride!" she decided happily, turning to him and catching him staring. She tilted her head to the side: she didn't quite get all that friends-more than friends stuff, but Mike definitely looked at her differently than he looked at Max.

"Okay" he nodded, linking their fingers – he never did that with Max or with the boys – "maybe we can stop by the park, if you want".

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And so they did.

Mike parked his bike right outside the green fences, grabbing her hand again. He just loved the feeling.

"So" Mike began to talk, suddenly feeling nervous "I wanted to ask you something".

El felt her heart begin to race as she nodded eagerly, wanting to know what he had to ask her; maybe he wanted to be more than friend? Maybe he wanted to go to another park?

They sat on a bench nearby, "I was just wondering if you wanted to go to the lake with me, on Sunday?"

Eleven smiled at him "I'd like to go".

"Sure?" he asked again, his eyes wide "I meant, just the two of us, you know".

She just frowned, not getting what he wanted to say. It was just the two of them in that moment, too, so what was the difference?

Mike, on the other hand, was freaking out; he asked her out *to the lake* and she had said yes. They would be alone, in a very romantic

place.

"I like just the two of us" she shrugged, swinging her legs as her feet didn't touch the ground "don't you?"

"Yes" he answered quickly, nodding "I like the two of us".

She hummed lightly as she closed her eyes and let the sun kiss her skin, inhaling the perfect scent of freshly cut grass; the sounds around them didn't disturb her, they just made her feel at ease. Children laughing, people running, dogs barking. She liked hearing people after being alone for so long.

At some point Mike had left to go buy ice-cream, telling her to stay there and don't move for any reason at all. Eleven had nodded at him, feeling just the tiniest bit anxious as she was left alone.

"Hi" a boy sat next to her, too close for her liking.

And suddenly it felt like back when she had known the boys, when she could barley say yes and no; it was different, talking with someone when her friends were around.

"H-hi" she stuttered, inching a little bit away from the guy.

He extended his hand "My name's Toby. Why are you here all alone?"

El looked at his hand skeptically: she only held Mike's. So she just told him "I'm El. I'm waiting for Mike".

"Is he your boyfriend?" the boy asked as his face fell a little.

El didn't know what a boyfriend was, so she just shook her head a little, looking at him; he had brown hair and blue eyes – he sure looked kind, but she didn't trust just anyone after what she had been through.

Toby's face rose when she shook her head, though she didn't get why "I came here looking for a friend, but I can't find him. You wanna help me? I can let you try my skateboard".

She didn't know what a skateboard was, but when he pointed at the little table with wheels she remembered about Max's. The boy rose from his seat and extended his hand again, waiting for her to follow him; he didn't seem bad, he just looked like he wanted to be friends.

"Hey" Mike's voice made her jump a little "everything okay?"

He was looking the boy in a not so friendly way, eyes narrowed.

He handed Eleven her ice-cream, sitting next to her again.

"Everything okay, Mike" she smiled at him, linking their hands again.

"But you told me-" Toby was about to ask again if he was her boyfriend or not, but stopped at the look Mike gave him and just shook his head.

"See you around, El" the boy said, going away with his skateboard.

Mike was shaken from his thought when El hummed in delight: that was the most delicious ice-cream she had ever tasted! Instead of her usual cone, Mike had gotten her some vanilla squeezed between two waffles.

"Oh I love this" she yelled, taking another bite "this is the best thing I have eaten!"

Mike laughed at her enthusiasm – she was always like this when it was about ice-cream, but that day, she was ecstatic.

As she finished eating, they stood and began to walk hand in hand.

"If you want, we can get more on the way ba-" not even letting him finish, she flung her arms around his neck and buried her face in the crook of his neck. He was starting getting taller than her.

Mike thought she was just particularly happy, but after a few seconds he noticed she was crying by the wetness she left on his shirt.

"El?" he said, concerned "El what's up? Did I say something wrong?"

She just tightened her grip, not that there were people stopping by watching her.

"El please" he said, hugging her back "please, tell me what I did".

After a while she pulled back, looking at him with such gratefulness in her eyes he couldn't believe it "Thank you".

"For what?" he asked, wiping her tears away with his thumbs.

"You take care of me. You stay with me. You don't hurt me".

"I spoil you" he said, trying to make her laugh and he succeeded.

He hugged her again, securing his hands around her waist tightly

"El, I would never, ever hurt you. Okay? Never, because..."

He hesitated: he didn't know if it was the right time to tell her. Or maybe he was just being stupid and needed to grow a pair and just spit it out.

Just as he was about to complete his sentence, Hopper's voice made them jump "Wheeler, hands off!"

Eleven wiped away the tears she had left, afraid Hopper would kill Mike if he saw her crying. Looking at the car and then again at Mike, she bit her lip: she didn't want to go, but she had to.

"It's okay, El, we'll see each other tomorrow" he said, smiling "keep your walkie talkie on".

She nodded, smiling again at him and giving him a brief kiss on the cheek – and by the way, he could feel the Chief's stare burning on him – before unlatching their linked fingers and running towards

Hopper's car.

While she was riding home, she kinda tuned his voice out thinking about the way Mike made her feel: tingly, happy, safe.

She didn't know why, but she only felt that with him.

With Hopper it was a different kind of safe. It was like...

"Dad" she whispered, looking outside the window of the car.

Hopper almost shot out of the driveway – she had called him *dad*.

After that long silence, she kind of looked hesitant "Is 'dad' okay?"

"Of course, kiddo, of course" the man was almost in tears, "it's more than okay".

She nodded "Can I ask something?"

"Sure, go ahead"

"What is it called when your stomach is tingly? And you feel warm and...happy?" she asked, with an innocence that made Hopper's heart clench.

That Wheeler boy...if he caught him alone, they needed to have a few words.

"I think you should go to someone else for that..."

"Why? Why not you? You know things"

"Shit – okay, listen. When you feel like that, it's called love. It's when you...when you really really like someone and you think they're your soul mate".

"Soul mate?"

"Your other half. The person that somehow completes you".

She nodded slowly.

"Hey" he called for her, frowning "no funny business with the Wheeler boy, remember".

She nodded again, leaning against the car seat.

Maybe Mike was her other half.

---

Oh my Mileven feels. They make me happy, and maybe I'm crazy, but that's okay.

I just wanted to thank everyone that followed/put the story in the favorites and left a review. Every comment is appreciated, and if you have any suggestions or things to point out do so, even PM me it's okay. :3

See you soon!

### 3. Sleepovers and kisses

So, let me clarify some things before we start.

If you'd rather read the story and ignore my rants, just skip all the part written in bold!

First of all: thank you to everyone that decided to spend those five minutes writing a review and giving such good advice.

**Big up for phieillydinyia that noticed my shitty slip up: there wasn't a Hobbit film at the time. So so sorry. It just slips my mind sometimes, I'll correct that as soon as I can.**

**So there have been two suggestions: a 4th of July chapter in which my two birdies celebrate together and more action.**

**So far I can only tell you: wait another chapter, then the action is gonna come!**

**About the 4th of July chapter, it really isn't a bad idea and I've decided to open an instagram account on which I'll do surveys about what I should/shouldn't do with the suggestions I get from you guys and I'll keep you updated. (search for: percyandnico on Insta, I've got a Mileven pic in balck and white).**

**That being said, have a nice read! 3**

---

"You sure you'll be okay?" Hopper asked for the tenth time just as she was about to get out of the car.

At that point, Eleven rolled her eyes at him "It's just Max, relax".

As she was stepping to the front door of Wheeler's house, Hopper grumbled "Relax".

"Sorry I'm late" she said, "I slept a lot".

"Slept well?" Mike smiled at her and led her inside, where everyone was already gathered. Max ran up to her, smiling excitedly as they ran over what she had brought to make sure she had everything.

"You brought all that stuff for just one night?" Lucas was staring at her stuffed grey bag, eyes wide. Eleven just shrugged "I brought what she told me to..."

"Wait, what is th-" as Max was taking her teddy bear out of the backpack, Eleven caught it in a swift movement, so fast no one actually saw what it was; it wasn't that she was ashamed of sleeping

with it...she just didn't know if the others would've found it weird.

At that point, everyone gathered around her begging her to show what she had behind her back, like she could have a nuclear bomb or something like that.

Mike tried to reach out for her arm, but she built some kind of invisible wall between the two. He just raised an eyebrow "Really?"

Eleven nodded and, when the others were distracted by her creation, she dashed to the bed and stuffed the teddy bear inside; as she lost all concentration on that spot, the wall disappeared and the boys plus Max fell face forward.

As she turned around, she found Mike hovering over her shoulder with a sly smirk on his face "I saw it!"

She just glared at him and pushed him away, plopping down the bed next to her backpack and hugging it close. Mike was being so stupid about it all; why did she even had to show him if she didn't want to? Deep in the back of her head, she knew she was overreacting a little but she couldn't help but feel like he was making fun of her.

He, on the other hand, had just froze in place at her sudden bad mood. And, as oblivious as he was, he just blankly asked "Did I do something wrong?"

At that she huffed and left the room with her backpack on her shoulder, and Max said "Mike, what did you do now?"

While she was stomping down the stairs, she bumped into Nancy and the girl almost fell backwards down the stairs; El just extended her hand and pulled her back on her feet before she could collide with the ground, wiping the blood away from her nose just as soon as it came out.

"Thanks, El" Nancy stood there for a second, dumbfounded; she noticed the girl's grimace, which was very uncommon when she was with Mike, so she just frowned "Is everything alright?"

Eleven just shook her head, feeling grumpier than when she had to wait for Hopper extra late "Mike's just being stupid".

Nancy chuckled at that "Tell me something I don't already know. Wanna talk about it in front of something to eat?"

Eleven looked back at Mike's room, then back at Nancy and shrugged "Okay".

As they sat down to the kitchen table, the older girl slipped a plate with some cookies over to her, watching amused as Mike peered over the door trying to understand what was happening; Eleven just closed

her eyes and grumbled, flicking her head on the right and making him stumble out of his hiding spot.

"Seriously, El? Again?" he said, exasperated letting his hands fall to his sides "What did I even do? Please talk to me?"

Nancy was watching with pure amusement until she said "Mike, just go back to your room. We're gonna talk for a while and then she'll come".

Eleven looked at her gratefully, and when they were alone, she said "I know I don't know a lot of things, but I don't like it when people make fun of me".

Nancy narrowed her eyes "Hey, it's not your fault if you don't know things. You're getting good, trust me, you just need your time. What did that knucklehead do?"

"I...I didn't want to show them my...my teddy bear. And he spied and he saw it and then laughed at me".

Nancy face palmed, shaking her head a little "Listen, El, boys can sometimes be stupid. But not stupid-stupid, just...feelings-stupid. Like they don't know how to handle feelings and do stupid things".

Eleven slowly nodded, still a little confused: she didn't think Mike was stupid, but sometimes he did do what Nancy was saying.

"Nancy, what's a boyfriend?" she blurted out.

"What?"

"A boy at the park asked me if I have a boyfriend, but I don't know what it is so I just said no"

Nancy sighed "It's...uhm. Okay take two people: they really, really like each other – we can say they *love* each other. At some point, they become boyfriend and girlfriend. So they hug and kiss and other things".

"But what's a kiss?"

"It's when you press your lips on someone else's lips".

At that, the youngest of the two narrowed her eyes: Mike had done that, two years ago, but he hadn't asked her to become boyfriend and girlfriend.

"And girlfriend and girlfriend? Or boyfriend and boyfriend?"

"No, El – I mean yes. It can also happen, yes" she sighed again, feeling as if conversations with the kid were always gonna be like that.

The girl nodded slowly taking it all in, frowning and looking lost in thought "I'm going upstairs".

As soon as she entered the room, everyone fell quiet.

Mike got near her, stopping a few feet away.

She just looked at him blankly before sighing and grabbing his hand "Knucklehead".

The tension immediately went away and everyone started to gather everything to move into the basement, where El quickly found her comfort spot in the familiar fort.

Mike looked at her funny, feeling a little weirded out by her swinging mood.

Eleven fidgeted with his walkie talkie for a little before picking up a comic book and reading – well, if you can consider looking at the pictures reading – it in silence. Max let her be for a little while, then sat next to her pulling the blanket down so they could have a little privacy "What's up?"

El sighed, her eyes almost watery "I don't know. I just feel so grumpy right now!"

Max laughed softly "It can happen, El. There's bad days, it's just that, you need to relax a little. We're gonna have fun tonight".

It was hard for her, Max could understand that: she had always been like that too. Just vomiting her feelings out, not being able to tone them down when she was around her classmates cause she had never really had friends so she didn't know how it would feel. But then again, El's situation was even worse, as she had never had any kind of human contact for so long.

"Yeah" the girl whispered, letting her head fall on the wall behind her "and it's like Mike doesn't even *get it!* I want...I want..."

"To taken care of. It's called cuddling, by the way".

"Cudd-cuddling?"

"Yes, to cuddle; you do it all the time with Mike, like when you two snuggle up together, or when he gives you those little rubs on the head. It's when you get touchy and close".

"Oh. I get it".

"So you just want to feel like he actually cares and does something, while he just stands there without doing anything".

"Yes!" the other one exclaimed "You understand me".

"That's because I'm a girl, I know it can be hard sometimes...to feel so down suddenly without anyone to comfort you. But when boys get stupid, there's always friends".

"Friends" El smiled at her, feeling a little bit of nervousness slipping away.

Will had always been good at listening to her, she had fun with him



and it still felt different than with the others, but Max was a girl, she was right, she understood perfectly.

"Can...can you read this to me?" Eleven said, smiling a little "Hopper is teaching me, but I still can't".

"Of course" Max smiled the brightest of smiles, adjusting and then taking the comic from her hands and starting to read it.

"Guys, I don't even know what I did" Mike was feeling overwhelmed.

"I don't know buddy, don't ask me" Dustin shrugged "but your girl sure makes a good impression of Spiderman, Lucas".

"You should just talk to her," Will said, like it was obvious "if you don't know, just talk".

"Can we at least finish this campaign?" Lucas asked, irritated. Girls.

When Mike lifted the blanket to talk to Eleven, Max was already halfway through the third comic book.

"Oh you finally made it, congratulations!" Max retorted ironically, pushing him away so she could exit the fort. Mike took her place and everyone outside decided to go upstairs and eat something – more than likely give the two space.

"I'm sorry" he said suddenly, taking her hands in his "whatever I did to make you upset, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to".

Eleven watched him from underneath her eyelashes, "I'm sorry, too. I...I got too mad, but...but..."

"Eleven" Mike squeezed her hands, "don't be shy, just spit it out".

"Why should I spit?"

"It means just say it".

"Oh" she was quiet for a second, then she spoke "I just thought you were making fun of me because I sleep with my teddy bear, and I'm also very grumpy today and that's it".

It was the first time Mike saw her like that: what she was doing, was literally whining. She was throwing him a tantrum over being grumpy. But even so, he couldn't be mad at her. He sighed and pulled her to him, hugging her close "I'm sorry, you're right El. I should've understood".

"You're a knucklehead, it's okay".

"When did you learn that anyway?"

"Nancy explained".

"Should we stay home or go outside?"

"Stay!"

"Go!"

"Both!"

Everyone was talking and it felt like the room was about to explode, while Mike Will and El waited for them to decide. El just sighed and tugged at Mike's hand, saying in almost a whisper "Mike, I want to cuddle".

As she said that, the room fell quiet until Lucas' laughter filled the room, followed by everyone else. Even Will was laughing uncontrollably "I'm sorry Mike, it's just so funny to look at your flustered face!"

Eleven blushed "Did I say something wrong?"

"No, El, it's okay" Mike sighed and laughed softly at her innocence. She was so pure he almost thought he didn't deserve her at all.

As soon as he was settled on the couch, she snuggled into him and rested her face in the crook of his neck, finally sighing in content. There were lots of things that went through her mind.

"El, we're gonna go buy ice-cream" Max said "do you want me to buy some so we can eat it tonight?"

"Yes!" she exclaimed "And we're gonna eat Eggos, too?"

"Already got 'em" the redhead smiled wickedly at her before leaving the room with Lucas, Dustin and Will.

Mike had started drawing circles on her arm, making her shudder from time to time.

At some point, she nuzzled his neck with her nose, "Mike?"

"Yeah?"

She looked up and noticed he was already looking down at her, and she got a little lost in his eyes. She liked them: they were comforting and they reflected so much emotion.

And just like that, she leaned in and pressed their lips together. Mike stiffened, surprised, but then relaxed and leaned in too, his lips brushing against hers soon after they parted starting another long kiss.

It seriously felt like there was electricity between the two of them sizzling in the air, as they both felt their stomach turn and butterflies explode.

"E-El" he stuttered, not knowing what to say.

"I think you're my s-soul mate, Mike".

And then, without giving him the chance to reply, she grabbed him

by his neck and pulled him down again in a more decisive way. He cupped her cheek and lost his breath when she tangled her hands into his hair, pulling him closer.

"Woah there, El" he laughed, breathless "slow down a little, okay?"

"You don't like it?" she asked, eyes wide.

"No! No...it's not that. It's just – take it easy, okay?"

She nodded in response and he pecked her on the lips once again, loving the feeling of her soft lips on his.

For a while they just sat there, hugging each other and giggling from time to time, until the others returned and eyed them funny: one minute they weren't talking to each other and the other they're laughing and hugging.

As they came back, El eyed the box in Max's hands shouting "Ice cream!" and everyone laughed uncontrollably as she caught it in her hands with just a flip of her wrist.

---

As they reached Max's house, the girl wasted no time in greeting her parents: she just threw them an 'hi' and ran upstairs closely followed by Eleven.

It was entertaining, to say the least: as soon as they had become friends, Max had taken to her in a particularly fond way. So the two bonded quite quickly in those few weeks they spent together; Max listened to El's story of her past and she had immediately understood what the girl wanted more than anything (well, except Mike): she wanted to live like a normal teenager, feeling love, going to school and all that jazz.

El had learned a lot about the redhead, too: she had told her about how she hated her family, about Billy, practically about everything. And El soon found out that when her friend started talking, it was *fast* so she had to focus to keep up.

"So" Max said while they were changing – and yes, she had told her, we can change in front of each other we are girls – "did he kiss you?"

"I kissed him" El answered with half a smile and a dreamy expression.

"Great! So now you two are together!"

"I don't know...he hasn't asked me, you know. To be his girlfriend"

"El" Max sighed, plopping down on her bed "I think you worry too much. The boy looks at you like you're the only thing in the world".

"Will says so too"

"Because" she stood up and grabbed the box of ice cream "Will is very

good at understanding feelings. And if I'm correct, he doesn't like girls".

"What? No?" Eleven asked, thrilled.

"No, just think about this..."

---

"Mike, man, you got yourself a girlfriend!" Lucas was howling like a madman, as Dustin shook his head.

"At least it's El, so she's not some boring pretty face" he shrugged, then smiled widely "I'll be waiting for the perfect one to show her this pearls. Grrr"

"And here I thought you'd never grow a pair" Will sighed, leaning against the closet, mimicking his dreamy eyes "oh I love El, but I'm so stupid I cannot bring myself to tell her!"

"Shut up, guys" Mike was glaring at them but he had this big smile on his face he couldn't wipe off; he had waited for so long.

"And anyways, I wasn't the one that started the kiss. She did" he admitted, still not believing what had happened just a few hours before.

"What?" Dustin looked astonished, while Will snickered "I imagined".

"Wait, what? Why?" Mike frowned, offended by Will's remark.

The smaller just rolled his eyes "You haven't kissed her since the Snow Ball, I figured she'd get tired of you pissing your pants. She's a tough one".

"Thanks for your trust, Will, but I had planned to ask her out tomorrow. I...I invited her to the lake so we could spend the day together, just the two of us".

"Oooh" the boys echoed all together, laughing at his flustered expression.

"You better get used to this" Will whispered to him, watching Dustin and Lucas amused "I don't think they're gonna let go quite easily"

---

Eleven ate her third Eggo with a spoonful of ice-cream listening to Max's story of how she and Lucas ended up in trouble for sneaking around during school.

"My dad said that if I want, I can go to school" Eleven chewed on her lip, "but I will need extra lessons and I'd have to work really hard".

"I think you'd like school" Max smiled at her excitedly "and we could help you with everything, I could even get you started at reading this

summer!"

"Really?"

"Really! It's easy, you just need to get the hang of it, then it's almost automatic".

Eleven nodded, smiling.

There were so many questions she had for her friend, she didn't even know where to start.

"Uhm, so...now that I kissed Mike, does this mean we're girlfriend and boyfriend?"

"Yes, it should. Usually the boy or the girl asks, but hey" Max shrugged "sometimes it's just obvious. Like, I would've considered you and Mike already together if I didn't know about your situation. You should've seen the way he looked when I first met him..."

"How?"

"I guess the boys could tell you more about this, but when I met everyone he was seriously depressed. He had this sad eyes, this way of walking and talking that just gave away what his true feelings were" Max sighed, "and that time that you made me slip from my skateboard? Yes El, don't give me that look, he told me and I'm not mad at you. He *panicked*. He went running outside the gym screaming your name".

"I know" El whispered, eyes full of tears "I wish I had found a way to come back earlier".

"It doesn't matter: you're here now, and you saved us again. We're never letting you go now, El".

## 4. Lost family

As always I wanna start by giving a big thank you to everyone that is reviewing this story and keeping up with it. You guys are awesome and your kind words only make me want to write more and more!

So a special thank you to my 'regulars', who review as soon as the chapter is out and don't even miss one! Your love is really appreciated and everything you suggest is being kept in mind.

Phieillydinyia: yes, there will be more action as the story unfolds, I think you'll like this chapter in particular.

Roselynnnejones: thank you and yes, I know that some stories with really good plots are written horribly; I didn't continue some of them because I found it disturbing to continue with that kind of writing. So a really big thank you for recognizing the hard work I put into writing this (plus my mother language isn't English, so I'm feeling kinda flattered.

As for the story, I'm loving being able to follow El's growing character with each chapter: as she learns more about the world, she develops more intricate and deep thoughts; her relationship with Mike is going to get deeper as the story unfolds, and I intend on deepening her relationship with Hopper too.

That being said, have a fun read! And follow my instagram account for updates: percyandnico (with the Mileven b&w pic).

---

Eleven closed her eyes as she felt the sun kiss her skin.

It was a nice day, probably the nicest day of the whole summer. Maybe it was because of Mike's hand holding hers, or maybe it was because she had never really went to something remotely similar to a date – except the Snow Ball, but even then, they weren't really alone. Hopper hadn't been really crazy of the idea of them going to a date together, obviously sensing that something was moving between the two of them; of course he had imagined way before that that they'd get together eventually, he just had hoped it would come later than sooner.

'Dad, it's just Mike' she had argued at his expression, laughing as it became even worse than before.

'Great job, Chief' she heard him grumble as she left to go to her room 'way to let her know who rules in this house'.

Mike and Eleven sat their things down in a relatively quiet place: the lake was usually crowded during summer, but they had chosen the spot with less people possible.

Mike was particularly thrilled by the idea of a *date* with the girl of his dreams, but at the same time he felt kinda nervous about the whole 'ask her to be your girlfriend or you're a pussy' thing. Lucas had been clear: mark your territory. It sounded stupid to him: why should he want to mark Eleven? And how? It wasn't as if the girl was his property, he knew that. But then again he wasn't the brightest of them when it came to girls, so he decided to follow Will's tip; 'ask her, Mike. Girls wanna feel wanted, too. So you might just grow a pair and ask her out'.

It wasn't like he hadn't prepared himself: before El's sudden kiss, he had planned out to kiss her when the sun was setting and talk about everything, but he still felt nervous about the whole thing.

"Mike? Everything okay?" Eleven's voice made him jump a little, but he smiled and nodded at her.

He found himself staring at her from the third time in ten minutes: she was just so perfect, with her round lips begging him to kiss them, those shiny eyes scanning everything around them and her wavy curls framing her face perfectly.

"You look beautiful" he said, squeezing her hand "you really do".

"Thanks" she smiled and blushed, lowering her gaze for a moment "you too".

She bit her lip for a moment, and he knew she was going to ask him something by the way she did so: twisting it between her teeth, trying to find the right words.

"Can you – I mean do you swim? I can't...but I really want to go in the water" she said, a little bit ashamed as usual; he had told her she didn't have to feel that way, but he also understood that sometimes it may feel too much, to always have to ask.

"Yes, I can swim," Mike smiled his best smile "besides, we can stay near the shore for the first times, so your feet can touch the ground". She nodded and gave him a grateful smile before lifting her shirt

above her head. Mike had a flashback: Eleven, just a few years back, trying to get changed in front of all of them; her eyes then panicking when he tried to close the bathroom door. Little did he know... She was wearing this cute white swimsuit that hugged her body just right.

Plus, now that she was playing outside under the sun and getting fresh hair and eating more her scrawny figure had turned into a full, healthy one and her skin had gained color.

As they neared the shore, she just froze, eyes scanning the water. Water wasn't something she was very fond of: too many bad memories. But she knew, she *knew* it was just her head playing stupid tricks, she had to move on with her life and look at her fears straight in the eye. She was looking at water now, but that didn't seem to help.

And Mike – he was so caring, squeezing her hand, but he didn't know.

There were still lots of things she hadn't told him, afraid of losing control and crying. She didn't like crying, nor fighting; when she felt those strong emotions, she couldn't control her power.

"El, it's nothing, I promise" he whispered in her ear, a feeling of calmness washing over her "I promise you'll be okay. I'll be there with you".

"Promise?"

"Promise".

She gripped his hand and tensed visibly when they were waist-deep into the water. It was not like in the lab: she was free to move, no needles on her head, the water was clear and cool and it caressed her skin smoothly; but she still felt nervous, jumping when her feet touched anything underwater. Mike guided them a little forward until she stopped him "Can we stop here?"

"Of course, El" he smiled at her, trying to keep up with the conversation so she could focus on that and not on her fear.

He told her about the sea: it was enormous, not like the lake, much more. She wasn't sure she liked the idea, but Mike had assured her it was beautiful and promised her she'd take her to his next vacation, so she could see more of the world.

"Maybe when we're bigger, we can travel together" he said smiling, "I can take you to lots of cool places. If you join school, you can even come with us to those fantastic school trips! You'd love it, they teach



you so many things!"

Eleven smiled at him "Do I get to see you at school?"

"Y-yeah of course, we can get your schedule combined with mine and the others' if you'd like it, but we have to talk to Hopper".

"Already did" she said, "he said I have to work extra hard if I wanna go. Max offered to help".

"I can help too. And the others too, I'm sure you'd be a great student El! We can sit together at lunch, do group projects together..."

He went on a rant about school activities and science in particular, and she didn't find it boring at all. She was sure she'd love school, she just knew, but she didn't know if she was gonna make it...

"It would be a little bit harder for you" he admitted, honestly "but nothing impossible. You saved the planet, El, school won't hurt you or anything".

"At school there's...mouthbreathers" she remembered.

"I don't think they'd be a problem either, El" he smiled, then frowned

"I wouldn't let them do anything bad to you".

Eleven smiled brightly at him: he made everything look so...so...sunny. She couldn't think of a better word, even though she knew it wasn't the most appropriate one.

They splashed around for a while, Mike still close to El.

As they lay down on their towels, linking their fingers, El admired the sun setting down with wide eyes.

"El..." Mike whispered, catching her attention "I wanted to talk to you. About yesterday".

She turned her head to the side, facing him; he was so handsome with all the colors of the setting sky playing on his face.

"I...I have waited for so long to say this," he breathed out, his anxiety leaving him "El, I-"

"Mike!" a voice broke the spell of that moment, a girl with long brown hair coming into their view.

He mentally face palmed: seriously? Everytime he was about to confess his feelings to Eleven, someone *had* to interrupt him; but of everyone on earth, must *Daisy* do it?

She was the most irritating girl he knew; ever since he had started playing occasionally in the school band, she had started to stalk him. She went to almost all his extra courses, she ate at a table near him at lunch, she even left him a note in his locker once!

Back when Eleven hadn't come back yet, he had had a fight with the

boys about her: they always teased him about them being in love someday, but the thought of Eleven always occupied his mind so thinking that they could replace her like that made him insanely mad.

"Hi, Daisy" he sighed, shaking his head lightly "what's up?"

"Nothing, it's just surprising seeing you here" she said, too cheerful for El's liking: her words seemed fake, sugar-coated on a sickening level. At the sight of the brown-haired Daisy, Eleven's eyes went darker and darker, almost black; Mike eyed her from the corner of his eyes, thinking of a way to get rid of the newly acquired company.

"Uhm, it's Hawkins" he said awkwardly "the city's small".

She laughed as she sat down next to him, touching his arm "You're right, you're right. So...do you have any plans tonight? We're throwing a party, if you want to come".

"I don't know," he said "I don't think I can. I'll let you know".

"Now, if you'll excuse us..." Eleven interceded, brows knit together as the other girl looked at her from head to toe before standing up and giving Mike a final wave.

While she was walking away, she was tempted of making her fall on her ass, but Mike squeezed her hand "Eleven, don't".

"Why do you care?" she said accusingly, turning to him.

"I don't" he raised an eyebrow "are you jealous?"

"No, I'm not" she declared, crossing her arms "why would I be? It's not like you're my boyfriend".

He stared at her mouth agape, then smiled wickedly "Is that so? Then why should I do this?"

He grabbed her chin and kissed her in the most tender way possible, caressing her cheek.

It wasn't like the other kisses: this was expected, and Mike had put such sweetness in it Eleven felt her heart could get out of her chest any moment. She watched him with half-lidded eyes as they parted, smiling and watching him with her big eyes.

"Do you want to be my girlfriend?"

She flung her arms around his neck, hugging him closely "Yes!"

They spent the rest of their afternoon strolling around happily, hand in hand, sharing quick kisses and laughing at each other's embarrassment. They reached the park and went to sit on one of the benches, El's head leaning on his shoulder.

"You can't try to kill every girl that tries to talk to me, you know?" he

sighed, stroking her hair softly "And you can't go crazy on me either, El".

"She was touching you. She can't" she retorted, eyes narrowed.

"I-"

"Mike! We're heading to the party! You coming?" Daisy's hair was in a ponytail now, a cute blue dress with a bow behind it framing her figure.

El glared at her. Still too close.

Hopper's honk made them jump, but El refused to go until that girl was there with Mike. He sheepishly looked between the two girls, who were now exchanging glares. He turned to Hopper and mouthed 'help me' but the Chief just laughed at him.

"Shouldn't you go?" Daisy asked Eleven, placing a hand on Mike's arm

"Let's go, Mikey".

"Oh yeah, Mikey" Eleven grunted, jumping on her feet and facing Daisy "you let go of his arm and leave him alone".

"And who is telling me to, exactly?"

"His *girlfriend*" she shot her a glare that could've made anyone's skin crawl "now go".

Daisy walked away grumbling "Freak" under her breath. Eleven glared at her back until she disappeared behind a building.

"Woah" Mike was smiling like crazy "you really *are* jealous".

"I'm not" she denied, looking over at Hopper's car "I really should go".

"Yeah" Mike whispered, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear "you're beautiful, you know that right?"

"Thank you" she smiled and blushed as she always did when he told her such things, then she stood on her tiptoes as he saw him leaning in; he kissed the corner of her mouth, not wanting to be killed by Hopper on the spot.

"See you tomorrow" she whispered, hugging him briefly.

As she got on the car, Hopper didn't say anything: he just looked at Mike for a few seconds, his stare burning him on the spot. The boy waved at him sheepishly and started walking back home, hands in his pockets.

"So" Hopper said, starting the engine "what are you now, dating?"

"Yup" Eleven said casually, trying to hide her growing smile; Hopper rolled his eyes but couldn't even pretend to be mad, he just loved to see her so happy.

"Still, no funny business" he reminded her, trying to sound stern.

They exchanged a look and El nodded before smiling over at him "I love you, dad".

"I love you too, kiddo" he sighed "even if you're a moody teenager".

---

Eleven found herself in the familiar dark void, only blackness surrounding her.

She felt as though she was back in the lab, her father sending her to track people down for his own interest. Only this time she hadn't been the one who initiated the contact; she was sure, she had went to sleep just as her head hit the pillow, too tired to even eat.

She heard faint crying in the distance, and she turned around expecting someone to be there, but nothing.

She moved a few steps, unsure of what to do, then she just followed her instincts: someone was crying and probably needed help, she couldn't just ignore it; she wished she had been saved when she was in the lab, she wasn't gonna let people who were suffering alone.

As she got near the source of the crying, she could distinguish loud sobs and ragged breath; what the...?

A figure clad in dark clothing and with dark hair was kneeling in the distance, and Eleven froze when she recognized her: Kali.

"Kali?" she shouted, going from walking to running in a matter of seconds "Kali, are you okay?"

When she got near, her sister lifted her gaze, blood smeared on her face and some cuts on her bottom lip and eyebrow "Eleven...help me". Her eyes snapped open and she tried to catch her breath, panting heavily.

Without thinking twice, she stood up and clad herself in a t-shirt, a sweatshirt and some jeans. She slipped her shoes on and opened her backpack, throwing in her walkie talkie, some junk food she kept stocked in for late-night cravings, and a flashlight.

As she entered the living room, she checked the hour: two-three-two.

She glanced at Hopper snoring loudly on the couch, and sighed.

She hated to do this to him, but she had to; she had to save her.

"I'm sorry" Eleven whispered as she exited the cabin, running wildly towards the city.

She wasn't going to go alone, she thought as she reached Mike's house, she wasn't going to get separated from him again. She had promised, and she had to keep her promise.

When she was outside, she got on her and Mike's channel, the one

they used for emergencies.

"Mike? Mike! Wake up!"

"El?" his groggy voice came just a few seconds later "what's up?"

"We have to go. Dress up, get your backpack and walkie. It's an emergency".

He didn't even question her, not even one second, that's how loyal he was; just a few minutes later, he was outside the chilly summer night air "El? You're scaring me"

"Let's go" she said, "I explain on the way. Chicago".

"It's...it's far from here, El" he said, cautiously.

"I know" she whispered, holding on tight to him "you have to help me, Mike. Please".

"Okay" he slowly nodded "but we'll have to find a way".

"I know a way" she said, showing him the amount of money she had in her pockets "we'll take the big car. Don't worry, I've done this before".

"You have?" he asked wide eyed, following her through the dark streets of Hawkins.

"Yes...did I tell you about my sister?"

"You have a sister?!"

"Shh!" she sushed him, elbowing him "well, let me explain from the start..."

---

**I told you interesting things were coming...:)**

## 5. Lost and found

Hellooo!

Tysm for your support guys, I'm doing everything I can to satisfy every request in the shortest time possible, but even if the chapters might come later than usual remember that I still have to deal with school, friends, girlfriend and so on and so forth! :) Plus if a chapter takes more time than another it's just because I'm trying my best to write some cool shit.

---

So Eleven discovered that the big car was named bus, and that kids couldn't just expect to go back and forth with them; the lady behind the desk had given them a hard time until Mike told her it was an emergency, that her biological parents were waiting for her there and she couldn't just wait for next morning.

So now they were on the bus, Eleven still in the middle of her story about how she had gone to Chicago to find her sister and everything that followed.

"She told me we had to find the bad men, because they hurt mama. I wanted...to hurt them too. And I did, but I didn't kill; I couldn't. He had kids..." her eyes teared up "so Kali did it. It was horrible to watch".

"I can only imagine, El" Mike sighed, "but you don't belong to that life, and you know it. You're...good".

"But I did hurt the man" she remembered, lip trembling.

"And you stopped" he finished for her, giving her a smile "I don't want you to have that kind of life. It would also mean we'd be apart...and I can't lose you again. But I understand you want to help this Kali...she's still your sister".

Eleven nodded, then yawned loudly.

"Sleep" he said, opening his arms as she leaned on his chest "it'll do you good".

With Mike's soothing hand caressing her cheek and his scent all around her, she drifted into the best sleep she had ever had.

She found herself again in the darkness, this time Kali was right in front of her eyes: she wasn't bleeding anymore, but she still had blood stains on her face and on her clothes; her hands were

handcuffed to the side of a bed, hands trembling and blindfolded. This time, she couldn't bring herself to speak: she just looked in her general direction, as if she could *feel* El's presence. "I know you can hear me" Kali whispered, "I believe in you, Eleven. Help me".

She woke up panting once again, only this time Mike was holding her firmly, whispering in her ear to calm her down "El, I'm here with you, you were dreaming".

She still couldn't breathe, her chest going up and down and her eyes frantically looking for Mike's "It wasn't a dream. I saw her".

He nodded, lips tightly shut together, then proceeded to rub little circles on her back. As she finally caught her breath, the bus stopped and they quickly gathered their things to start their journey. Whatever it was about, Mike sensed it was going to be hard; what wasn't, with El?

He grabbed her hand, not risking to get lost in the crowd, then looked at her "I'm guessing you know where to go, right?"

"I don't care if there's no one left at the station" Hopper was practically growling *"we're sending all my men out there to look for her!"* He had woken up to find the house empty, the he had ran to the Wheeler's, to the Bayers', to the Sinclair's, to the Henderson's and even to that Max's house, but she was nowhere to be seen; the oh-so-weird coincidence? The Wheeler's brat had magically disappeared, too.

He had hoped, deep in his heart, that it had just been a stupid idea of two stupid teenagers to go somewhere and have their little adventure for once, but it was as though the earth had swallowed them; not in the woods, not at the lake, not at the arcade, not anywhere.

So now a new fear was forming in the back of his mind: the lab. Those bastards were capable of anything, but they didn't know what Chief Hopper was capable of: he'd have all their heads, he'd burn that fucking building down if they didn't give him his daughter back.

So that's when he was headed now: he started the engine and violently turned the steering wheel, directing towards Dr. Owen's house. As he got there, he slammed the door shut and banged on the door rather harshly, almost breaking into the apartment: what was that fucker doing?

"Yes?" the bastard had the face to show up in his pajamas, pretending

he didn't know what the fuss was about; Hopper just shoved him to the side and started going completely crazy on him. His sofa was flipped, his carpets all threw to the side "Where are you hiding her?"

"Hopper, what..."

"Don't give me any of that shit, Owens" his voice boomed in the apartment, his fist slamming into the wall and leaving a considerably big hole on it "my daughter has disappeared and I have every reason to believe you're responsible for this!"

Before the doctor could answer, Hopper caught him from his the collar of his shirt and pushed him on the wall, his head banging loudly "Where is she?!"

"I don't know!" the man screamed, partially in pain partially scared "I swear Hopper I don't know!"

The Chief pointed an accusing finger to the doctor's chest "I'm gonna find her, Owens. And if, when I do, you're even remotely responsible, I will kill you bare-handed".

Everyone was gathered at the Wheeler's house: the Byers, the Sinclairs, the Hendersons and Max, to show their support to the family. Ted, being the asshole everyone knew he was, told his wife to let him know when the kid got back and went to his business trip.

"This sucks" Dustin grumbled, plopping down on the sofa of the basement.

"I wonder where they could be..." Max shook her head, visibly shook.

"We have to do something" Lucas said, fists clenching at his sides while he stood up "we can't just sit around".

"No, no, no" Steve entered the room, brows knit together "no one leaves this house without the permission of their parents, no one goes searching for Mike and Eleven, it's too dangerous".

Dustin was mimicking the older one, and immediately stopped as he glared at him.

"Guys" Nancy sighed "I know it's hard to 'just sit around', Mike's my brother, but we don't even know where to start from. It's too risky, and you know it too well. You have to be patient, Hopper will find them".

The room fell silent, until Will stood up and excused himself, said he needed some fresh air; Steve was about to follow after him, but Dustin told him to give him a little space to himself.

"It's hard for him" Jonathan explained, entering the room "he always reminds me the way Mike always believed him, especially last year.



He wants to help, but he can't, and that's destroying him".

Max, eyes full of tears, buried her face in Lucas' shoulder, and he wrapped his arms around her. As Will came back, everyone huddled up together, hoping that their friends were okay.

"You sure it's here?" Mike asked, looking at the old building in front of them "looks abandoned to me".

"I'm sure" Eleven said, "she was here last time, she was here in the dream".

"Okay" Mike nodded, "but...shouldn't we have a plan or something?"

"No" she answered, turning her head to the side and extending her right hand, a crowbar flying to her.

She handed it to him, looking at him straight in the eyes; she stood on her tiptoes, put her hands firmly on his chest and kissed him hard "Let's go".

"Okay" he nodded, breathlessly, and they entered the building.

Oddly enough, it looked empty: no fire, no jackets laying around, only bottles scattered everywhere.

"Mick?!" Eleven screamed, calling the first name she remembered, a feeling of panic making its way into her chest: what if the lab had gotten Kali? Could she confront them all again?

Mike just followed her, keeping his eyes open for any danger; at the minimum sound, he'd jump over to El trying to shield her from every potential aggressor. She thought it was a cute gesture, but realistically she knew she'd be the one to shield Mike.

As they reached Kali's room, the one she usually slept in when she had visited her, they found her tied to the side of the bed just as Eleven had seen her in her dream.

"Kali!" Eleven screamed, throwing herself on the floor, trying her best to untie her: she couldn't, but her sister smiled weakly at her, then her eyes widened at something behind her shoulders "Ele..ven, behind you".

Just as she turned around, Mike was hit in the head by something metallic, falling harshly to the ground "No!"

She hovered him, hugging him closely "Mike? Mike!"

"How touching" a familiar voice made her jump, and she saw Axel putting a hand on his chest dramatically.

"Axel!" she said, panicking "Help me...Kali..."

He only looked at her, eyes cold, then whispered "Now".

She was hit on the head and fell into blackness.

In the meanwhile, Joyce was trying to comfort Mrs Wheelers, who was wondering how it could've happened; to be honest, Nancy wanted to snap at her and tell her it was because she was a shitty, absent mom, but she was just too devastated to do that.

Her mother had no idea: what if Mike was, somehow, in the Upside Down?

Had Eleven followed him to save him? Or was it the other way around? It was all questions and confusion in her head.

"Sadly, Nancy" Jonathan shrugged "there's no way we can tell. When Will was there, we found him thanks to Eleven; so I'd be relieved to know they're together".

"What if they're not?" when she voiced that thought, the boy couldn't think of anything reassuring to tell her, so they just sat in silence.

"Chief" Steve stood up as soon as Hopper came into the house, looking like hell: he had dark bags under his eyes, his skin was a yellowish color and it looked like he was about to have a breakdown.

"What?" he grumbled, slumping on a chair "Do you have any alcohol in here?"

"I-" Steve's answer was cut off by Nancy, who glared at the boy.

"I don't think that's a good idea" she sighed, sitting next to him and putting a hand on his "I know this is hard. And Jonathan and Joyce do too. But you can't let yourself give up like that; maybe they went on a honey-trip".

The Chief furrowed his brow, looking lost in thought for a moment, then he said "They'd better not be. I'll have your brother's head if so".

Nancy just smiled the best smile she could in that moment and then sighed, "So, is there a way we can help?"

"Figured you'd want something to do and to keep the brats occupied with. How are they doing?"

"Bad. Max's cried for what seemed like forever, and Will...well. He's not speaking with anyone" Steve shook his head, "Lucas tried to escape once or twice and Dustin just didn't make any cocky remark on the situation".

"You sure know the kids, huh" Hopper raised a brow and then proceeded to take out an Hawkins map circling some areas "These parts of the city and surroundings haven't been checked. Do that. Steve, you keep an eye on your pupils, tell them to try and reach them by their walkie talkies: they've brought them along".

Even though Steve wasn't particularly happy with his babysitter role, he agreed to it, not wanting to cause any more troubles to the Chief;

he sure looked like he was going to explode soon.

"I hope Mike and Eleven have a good reason for their disappearance, or Hopper is gonna go nuts on them" he whispered to the other two, that shook their heads while gathering their things.

"Nanc" he called before she could leave, throwing her a walkie talkie "this is Dustin's. If anything happens...just call us".

As Eleven opened her eyes, she felt her hands tied up and a seriously bad pounding on the back of her head.

Axel was sitting on a chair in front of them, his feet propped up on the table, a beer in his hands. As his eyes met hers, he smiled wickedly and clapped his hands together "Look who's finally awake. You finally decided to make company to your beloved Mike".

Eleven's eyes frantically looked for her boyfriend, until she found him laying a few feet away, tied too. There was blood on his bottom lip, signaling that they must've had some kind of fight.

"What does this mean?" she exclaimed, "And why the hell are we all tied?"

"You developed a pretty potty mouth, now didn't you" he said, and the girl really felt like wiping that smile off of his face "now Eleven, when you left, lots of things happened, but the most important is: you made Kali all soft, she started questioning if we were actually criminals, if we should stop".

He stood up, pacing around the room "Got us nearly arrested! Can you believe that? So, we decided things needed to change. But then...you came. You weren't part of our plan".

"That's right" Mick spoke up, and Eleven found her sitting on the floor a few feet from Axel "we don't know how she alerted you, but now...we'll have to take care of you and your boyfriend too".

"Let him go" Eleven growled, trying to break free from the knot tied around her wrists "he didn't do anything".

"That's why it's so fun!" Axel exclaimed, "and don't waste your energies in trying to undo that knot, you won't be able to use your powers on us".

Eleven didn't really understand, until it all clicked: Kali was tied up *and* blindfolded so she couldn't use her powers; they didn't know she didn't need her hands to use them.

As Axel neared her, Mike shouted "Get away from her, freak".

"How 'd you call me?" he asked, eyes full of madness "Freak? Imma show you what's a freak, kid!"

Hearing the screaming, the rest of the gang came into the room to find Axel over Mike, towering over him in a threatening way.

Using all the concentration she could possibly gather, Eleven untied Kali and Mike's knot; the boy looked at her in surprise, but he was wise enough to keep his hands behind him.

He was snatched up from his shoulders and his head hit the wall behind him, and as Axel was handed a crowbar, Eleven could only see red: *no one* was going to hurt Mike right in front of her eyes.

She untied her own hands and, even though she felt a little dizzy, she narrowed her eyes and a baseball bat in the corner of the room hit Axel behind his head, making him fall to the ground. With a quick movement, she grabbed Mike's hand and pulled him behind her, then screamed "Get the walkie, contact on of the others!"

Mike did as she said, frantically looking for the damn thing in the bag.

Eleven swiped her hand to the right and the chair hit Mick right in the legs, a loud cracking noise filling the room followed by screaming; a chair wasn't gonna do it for Funshine, who was marching towards her, and she just closed her eyes and screamed: his arm twisted in a sickening way, and a glass collided to his face.

Dottie was missing, but with a loud thud Mike made her fall to the ground: she was behind Eleven's back, trying to get to her without her knowing.

"Grab the bags" she ordered, getting the bat and the crowbar "let's go".

She helped an unconscious Kali to her feet, dragging her out of the room. As soon as she was seated on a couch, Mike got in contact with Lucas.

"Mike? Mike!" the boy heard his friend scream and a series of voices trying to talk.

"Lucas, get the Chief" he screamed the address and hoped they had gotten it right before closing the communication "I've got some stuff to do. We're in trouble, hurry".

The boy then proceeded to barricade the door of the room those psychopaths were locked in, and he and Eleven collapsed on the floor near Kali.

"El-even" she breathed out, smiling softly "thank you".

"Sleep, Kali" she said, smiling back at her "we can talk later".

Hopper had taken his car as soon as he had received the call, sirens

ringing and speeding down the road as fast as he could; nothing was going to keep him from his daughter, even though the first thing he felt like doing was killing Mike Wheeler. Escaping with his daughter, pft.

As he neared Chicago he slowed down, and he soon found the address he had been given; the place looked like garbage, and from inside came loud noises.

He found Mike, Eleven and a girl with dark skin in a large room, while a door was being held in place from Eleven herself, blood dripping from her nose "Dad, take Kali into the car. Don't tell the cops. Call the police, there are criminals in there".

"Well hold on there, lady" the man narrowed his eyes, glaring at Mike when the boy tried to talk, but Eleven looked him with pleading eyes and the man couldn't do much if not comply to what she was asking, reading in those eyes pure helplessness and distress.

"Shit" the Chief grumbled, "you're gonna give me a heart attack, sooner or later".

## 6. I'm gonna make this place your home

Hello!

I'm sorry for the long wait, but I kept changing things up with this chapter (you really don't know how many times I edited this). At least I gave you a oneshot to keep yourselves content while waiting (for those that haven't read it, it's called Shakespeare and it's obviously a Mileven fanfic).

In this chapter I finally gave a voice to two characters: Karen, for who I really wanted to write a motherly scene, and Kali, who has a big potential even on the show. I really hope they will give her more space in the series, as there are many ways her characater could develop.

As always, thank you to everyone who left a review in the previous chapter and to everyone that follows this story. For updates on my works, surveys, requests, follow me on Instagram: percyandnico.

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The ride back home was deadly silent, and not even Kali who had regained a little bit of her energy had dared to say anything; Eleven had once tried to change the radio station and Hopper had blocked her hand, so she just glared at him and changed it without raising a hand.

Kali had tried not to snort at that, but Mike hardly contained his chuckle.

As they got back to the Wheelers', Mike's mom hugged him tightly and for a moment the boy felt like he had his true mom back, not the always dull, sad wife she was now.

Then the long discussion started: the kids wanted to spend the night together, but the parents were obviously not going to let them; Mrs. Wheelers had had a rough day, and sure she wanted to ask his son where he had gone.

"Everyone shut up" the Chief's voice made them jump a little. He looked exhausted: he was pinching the bridge of his nose, trying to calm down the loud booming he felt into his head; not only Eleven had disappeared without saying anything, she had also brought home this "sister" and dragged along the Wheeler boy.

Now he had to explain the whole thing to the Wheelers, and he sure as hell wasn't going to explain it to all those other families, so he said "Kids, go home. You'll have your sleepover tomorrow, and we all know you're gonna talk about this whole thing on those goddamn walkies anyways. So just go".

Nobody dared to protest, not really because they were afraid of Hopper, but because of how exasperated he looked.

And it was true, he felt that way: he had lost Sarah, and he couldn't lose Eleven too. She had slowly become a very important part of him, his *family*, but the girl was far too instinctive for his liking, and sooner or later she had to understand that there were boundaries, rules to respect.

But in that moment – oh, in that moment he was far from thinking that calmly.

"Before you burst into one of your teenage crisis, just know that no showcase of your powers will scare me enough to lift your punishment, so try and go along with whatever I say and be thankful I haven't punched your knight in shiny armor just because he is a kid" Hopper was whispering to Eleven so that no one could hear their conversation, trying to calm himself before having to explain just why the two had escaped and returned with a girl no one had ever seen before.

"Don't talk about him like that" she hissed back, narrowing her eyes "it's not his fault".

"Oh, yes it is, maybe he's even *more* responsible for this; he knows what kids should and shouldn't do better than you do, yet he went along with your little plan – and guess what? Now we have to expose your story to even more people. Do you even try and understand how much I worry about you being taken away from those men again?"

Eleven couldn't find the right words to answer, feeling guilt rising from her gut, trying her best not to cry.

"Right" Hopper said, rubbing at his eyes "so just know that you're grounded: no Mike, no friends, just you, me, the cabin and your homework".

"You can't be serious!" she exclaimed, and everyone's eyes flickered to them "Please. I know what I did was wrong, but...but I needed to save her. She's my sister".

Mrs. Wheelers frowned in confusion.

"What the –" Hopper almost choked on his own words "Eleven, you

were in the laboratory together but that doesn't make you two sisters!"

Eleven's eyes shot up to his, full of pain and tears, as she spat "You don't understand! She does! And if she's not my sister, how are you my father?"

With that, she stormed out of the room and down to the basement, crashing a lamp with a flick of her wrist on her way out.

"I told you not to do that!" Hopper yelled at her back but she didn't even flinch.

Mike and Kali sat there, one shocked and the other one partially amused and partially worried; Mrs Wheelers looked like she was going to faint "She...she..."

"Yeah" Hopper exhaled "Guess I'm gonna have to explain this, now. You might as well run to your princess, Wheeler, you two are not gonna see each other for a little while".

"I don't want him near that...girl" Karen said, horrified, "she's--"

"Not gonna hurt me, mom" Mike interrupted her, voice firm "she's not gonna hurt me, just let the Chief explain".

"Eleven?"

The basement was completely dark and silent, yet Mike knew where to find her.

As he raised the blanket that covered the entrance of the little fort, Eleven glared at him "Go away".

"What? I thought I was your favorite person" he smiled softly at her and crawled in, sitting beside her and sighing as she showed no sign of life.

"I'm sorry I put you in this situation" she whispered, "I should've left alone".

"No, you shouldn't have, it would've been even more dangerous. But Hopper's right...we should've talked to him. I don't think he would've said no".

"Now you're on his side?" she was incredulous, eyes wide.

"No! I understand that you wanted to save Kali, but I also understand that he cares about you a lot".

"You care about me, too"

"That's different"

"How?"

Silence fell in the room.

"Me and Hopper, we both love you. But while my love is romantic,



his is a dad-like love. It's just different, El, and I think you should make up with him".

"You love me?"

Mike smiled widely and pressed their foreheads together "I think I had already made that clear".

She leaned in and pressed their lips in a sweet kiss, sighing; when they kissed, it was as if the world stopped and every danger, every problem momentarily disappeared.

"Eleven?" Kali's voice broke the magic of that moment, "we have to go".

They both stood up and as they walked to the door, Eleven bit her lip and tightened her hand around Mike's for a moment.

Before going away, Eleven waved at Mrs Wheelers and the woman smiled faintly at her: she felt bad for the kid, but she still was shaken from what she had seen.

After that, Eleven flung her arms around Mike's neck and kissed him on the cheek "I'm gonna miss you".

He sighed, running his fingers through her hair for a while "I'm gonna miss you too".

"Oh come on, it's just a week, don't make me look like a monster" Hopper grumbled, urging her to get into the car; they still had lots to talk about.

As Kali entered the small cabin, she looked around and smiled a little: it wasn't big, but it was better than anything she had ever had. It smelt of family and of pancakes.

There wasn't anything she felt like she could do to keep herself occupied: she had no clothes to fold, no bags to unload...she had nothing except El's reassuring smile always waiting for her when she turned to look at her.

She wondered what she had done to deserve all that love and support from that little girl.

"Okay" Hopper sighed, rubbing at his temples "We're all tired as hell and I haven't eaten in something like two days, so: you borrow Kali some clothes and show her to the bathroom so she can take a bath, I cook something, then we talk. Are we clear?"

Both girls nodded and Kali gave Hopper a grateful smile: Eleven had been very lucky to have him find her, he really was like a father to her, she could tell.

Maybe he wasn't going to get a father too, and maybe it was better that way. She needed to set her life straight and find the peacefulness she had never had.

"Here" Eleven smiled and led her to the small room on the right; it was nothing big, but the girl looked so proud of it "this is my room. Now we're gonna share it, and we can get you a bed..."

"Hurry" they heard Hopper calling from the other room "there's gonna be time for talking later".

Kali took a pair of baggy sweatpants that weren't too baggy on her as El was noticeably smaller, and a hoodie that fit her just right.

"I'll be waiting for you" Eleven smiled at her and turned on the bathtub "and don't worry, dad isn't gonna leave you behind".

Mike couldn't bring himself to sleep.

The thought of not seeing Eleven was driving him insane; he wanted to know she was safe and happy and okay. Not that she wasn't with Hopper, but when he left for work? And Kali? Were her friends going to escape and track them down?

A knock on the door pulled him out of his thoughts.

"Mike?" Karen's head appeared from behind the door, "Are you awake?"

"Yeah" he mumbled, not even bothering of sitting up straight.

"Can we talk?"

"If this is about Eleven being dangerous or something jus-"

"It's not" his mother sighed, now entering the room and closing the door behind her "it's about a few things, really. Not just Jane – I mean Eleven".

"Okay" he frowned and looked at her funny.

"Don't look at me like I'm your worst enemy" she chuckled nervously, and even in that chuckle Mike noticed a hint of sadness "It's just me".

"Yeah, and you know how long it hasn't been you?" he shot back a little too harshly, wincing at how he sounded too.

Karen set her lips into a thin line, not even scolding him for talking back like that: he was right, she knew, she had failed them both as a mother when they needed her the most.

"Listen, I won't ask you to forgive me or to understand, but I really want you to at least try" she sighed, shaking her head a little "okay?"

The boy nodded, biting on his lip as she sat in front of him on the bed.

"I know you're mad at me for not being there in the past year and a

half. I should've been a better mom, but no one teaches you how to handle parenthood, you know?" a dry chuckle escaped her lips "And after Will came back from his disappearance – not that I completely understood what happened anyways –, and the fear of losing my children faded away, I went through a very hard time. Your father and I...I don't even know why we are still together to be honest. If there's still hope, still just that tiny spark of love that can make things right".

"Then just divorce" Mike said, hostile once again.

"It's not that simple, Micheal" Karen looked truly saddened as she spoke "But this is not what I wanted to talk about. This is about us, me you and Nancy. You're my children no matter what, I should've been there for you – you survived a *real* war and the thought of losing you without even acknowledging you were in danger makes me sick with myself. So what I wanted to say is I'm sorry. I promise I'll do better, if you'll let me".

Mike was silent for a while, until he lifted his teary eyes on her and whispered with a crooked voice "You're my mom, how could I not forgive you?"

Karen smiled and leaned in for a hug, on the verge of crying too.

She had learned something new, too: her children were always going to be the thing she cared about the most.

"Well" she laughed a little after they separated "at least your long hours of playing D&D were not completely a waste, now were they?"

Mike smiled too and then he asked "What did the sheriff tell you, anyways?"

"Well, I was hoping you could explain it to me, as he went over the general details. And if I hadn't seen Jane make things fly with her mind I wouldn't have believed a single thing"

"It's Eleven, mom..." he corrected, then proceeded to explain "okay, let's start from the beginning..."

"Before we start this conversation" Kali said, helping Hopper with the plates "I just wanna say thank you for helping me".

Hopper sighed "Listen kid – well, you're not really a kid so listen Kali, it's not about you, nothing personal, it's just that..." he glanced at the bathroom door where Eleven was washing her teeth "I love her more than life itself, and she needs to understand that there are rules, boundaries to respect".

"You're right" Kali nodded "but I need to add something. Eleven isn't a

normal teenage girl – don't get me wrong, not in a negative way. Her life will always be crazy, she will always be this wild; protect her, give her rules, but don't ever, ever try and suffocate her true nature. She was born to do great things, and Papa ruined her in the worst way possible: she lost faith in the world and he broke her inside. You made her see light, hope, happiness, and her friends and boyfriend too".

Hopper grunted at that, but Kali smirked and both turned towards the girl as she left the bathroom.

"What's up?" she said, tilting her head to the side.

"Nothing" her dad said, pulling a chair out for her to sit "come here".

Eleven bit her lip and sat down, preparing herself for the long lecture she was going to get from Hopper, but he instead sighed and tried to calm down.

"So" he said, looking at her straight in the eye "care to explain to me what this story is, too?"

The girl slowly nodded and started from the very first beginning, flinching a little when Hopper's face went blank as she told him about her little trip to Chicago a while back.

As she finished telling the whole story, before Hopper could say anything, she looked at him with her kicked puppy expression "I'm sorry. *I know* what I did was wrong, but you didn't let me leave the house. I had to. I'm sorry...about everything".

Hopper was silent for a while, until he just grumbled "Gonna give me a heart attack one of these days".

Eleven smiled brightly at him and hugged him tightly, "I'm sorry".

"It's alright, kid" he said, "but you're still grounded".

"How long?" she whined.

"Dunno" he shrugged "let's see. For now you get to stay to the cabin, and lucky you, you even get to have company. You know you just got yourself someone to

share your room with, right?"

Kali smiled widely too, "Thank you, Chief. I really appreciate it".

"Ah" he said, "call me Hopper and don't be this polite, it's not necessary. You got any plans on what to do? School? Something?"

She looked lost for a moment as she shook her head "I don't know. I guess I'll start thinking about it".

The Chief nodded and with a final sigh he said "I guess we can call it a night".

When Nancy got up to drink at the early hours of the morning, she stopped by Mike's room as she heard voices coming from inside.

She opened the door only to find her brother and her mother talking.

"What are you two doing? It's 5 a.m." she yawned "just go to sleep already".

"Will do" Mike nodded, suddenly feeling sleepy "we were just talking".

"Oh" Nancy nodded, a little confused, but decided to let it go as it was too early to worry about that. Before going to sleep her mother did something that shocked her: she gave the both of them a kiss on the forehead, and Mike didn't even cringe when she did so.

It certainly had been an exhausting day for everyone.